

Tarawih Prayer

In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Compassionate

There are some misconceptions about tarawih prayer and how many raka'a it has. While some are saying any addition to 8 raka'a is bidah others are saying that not praying 20 raka'a is rejecting the Sunnah and the consensus of the Sahabah. So what's the truth and the right way concerning the question of how many raka'a tarawih prayer has? And in addition to that, is it obligatory to recite the whole Qur'an during tarawih prayer? Should Tarawih prayer be offered individually or in congregation?

It should be said that the vast majority of the scholars of hadith, fiqh, and the four mujtahid Imams are in agreement that 20 raka'a are the most appropriate, followed by 3 raka'a of witr, and this is also the opinion of Ahmad ibn Taymiyyah!

But first let's look what tarawih is.

Tarawih is a highly emphasised recommended prayer. It was called that because after they used to pray four units they would rest for a short while.

The literal meaning of the Arabic term 'tarawih' is derived from the root word 'rauh' or 'raha' which basically means to take a rest. Because it is customary to take a small break or rest halfway through these extra voluntary prayers of the nights of Ramadan, it came to be called and recognized as the 'tarawih' prayers so as to distinguish them from other voluntary night prayers.

Some linguists stated that Taraweeh is the plural of Tarweehah, which in origin is a name given for the practice of sitting. Then it was used to refer to the sitting that takes place every four units of prayer during the nights of Ramadan so that people could rest, or because they used to rest after every two units of prayer.

It was stated in al Misbaah: [The term: 'arihna bis-salaah' \(lit. soothe us by the prayer\) means to establish the prayer. Thus praying achieves a sense of raahah \(repose/tranquillity\). Thus the word taraweeh has been derived from that word. It \(i.e. Taraweeh\) is prayed in the month of Ramadan.](#)

It was stated in Al Furoo': ['One \(can\) rest between every 4 unit of prayer according to the agreement of the scholars, and supplicate therein. This was done by the pious predecessors. However, there is no harm in leaving that.'](#)

Tarawih prayer is with ijma a sunnah of the Messenger of Allah (saw). It is not an invention of Umar, as some state. (Nawawi, al Majmu 4/37; Buhuti, Kaschaf ul Qina 1/425; Abu Ishaq al Hanbali, al Mubdi 2/17)

Narrated Abu Huraira:

Allah's Apostle said, "Whoever prayed at night the whole month of Ramadan out of sincere Faith and hoping for a reward from Allah, then all his previous sins will be forgiven."

Ibn Shihab (a sub-narrator) said, "Allah's Apostle died and the people continued observing that (i.e. Nawafil offered individually, not in congregation), and it remained as it was during the Caliphate of Abu Bakr and in the early days of 'Umar's Caliphate."

'Abdur Rahman bin 'Abdul Qari said, "I went out in the company of 'Umar bin Al-Khattab one night in Ramadan to the mosque and found the people praying in different groups. A man praying alone or a man praying with a little group behind him. So, 'Umar said, 'In my opinion I would better collect these (people) under the leadership of one Qari (Reciter) (i.e. let them pray in congregation!)'. So, he made up his mind to congregate them behind Ubai bin Ka'b.

Then on another night I went again in his company and the people were praying behind their reciter. On that, 'Umar remarked, 'What an excellent Bid'a (i.e. innovation in religion) this is; but the prayer which they do not perform, but sleep at its time is better than the one they are offering.' He meant the prayer in the last part of the night. (In those days) people used to pray in the early part of the night." (Bukhari vol 1, p269)

Ibn Taymiyah said, when refuting the view of those who quoted 'Umar's words "What a good innovation this is" as meaning that innovation (bid'ah) is permissible: With regard to qiyaam in Ramadaan, the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) introduced this to his ummah, and he led them in prayer for a number of nights, because at his time they used to pray in congregation and individually. But he did not persist in leading them in one congregation, lest that be made obligatory for them. When the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) died, sharee'ah was established (and would not change after that). When 'Umar (may Allaah be pleased with him) became caliph, he united them behind one imam, Ubayy ibn Ka'b, who united the people in one congregation on the orders of 'Umar ibn al-Khattaab (may Allaah be pleased with him). 'Umar (may Allaah be pleased with him) was one of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs, of whom the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "I urge you to adhere to my Sunnah and the way of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs after me; cling tightly to it." So what he did was Sunnah but he said, "What a good innovation this is," because it was an innovation in the linguistic sense, as

they were doing something that they had not done during the life of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), i.e., gathering to do this, but it is Sunnah in the shar'i sense." (Majmoo' al-Fataawa, 22/234, 235)

It is prayed in units of two in congregation as well as the witr prayer (i.e. the tasleem is performed every two rak'ah due to the hadeeth: "The night prayer should be prayed in units of two.")

The witr should be performed with two (sets of) tasleems as has already been mentioned. It is more virtuous to perform it in congregation rather than individually according to the consensus of the companions as well as scholars. It is however permissible to pray it individually.

Malik and Shaafi'e said: 'it is better to pray it at home' due to the narration: "The best prayer of a person is at home unless it is an obligatory prayer."

Al Baghawī and others stated: 'The difference of opinion lies in the case for the one who has memorised the Qur'an and does not fear becoming lazy if he prayed by himself as well as congregation in the mosque being affected by his absence. If any of these conditions are not met, then praying in congregation is more virtuous without any dispute.'

It is prayed in the beginning of the night (after the 'isha prayer) and better to pray it after its sunnah due to the hadeeth found in the two saheehs which was reported by A'ishah (ra) who mentioned that he (saw) prayed it for some nights and they prayed it with him, then he would not come out and prayed it in his house for the rest of the month, and he (saw) said: "I feared that it would become obligatory upon you and you would be unable to perform it."

Ibn Taymiyyah stated: 'This is according to the agreement of the pious predecessors and the leaders of the Muslims. It is also called: Qiyaamu Ramadan as the Prophet (saw) stated: "Indeed Allah (swt) has ordained upon you fasting in Ramadan and praying in Ramadan (Qiyaamahu [i.e. Qiyaamu Ramadan] so the one who fasts and prays will have his sins forgiven."

As for it being held at the beginning of the night, then this is because the people used to do this in the time of 'Umar (ra) and it will be seen that they used to extend it towards the end of the night. As for the statement: 'It is better to pray it after its sunnah' i.e. it is better to pray taraweeh after the 'isha prayer after its sunnah due to the emphasis of the sunnah of 'isha. It is however permissible for one to pray it between 'isha and its sunnah, however it is better to pray it after 'isha's sunnah due to what Ahmad stated.

Al Majd stated: 'This is because it is disliked to delay the sunnah of 'isha beyond the preferred (mukhtar) time of 'isha, thus to follow 'isha with its sunnah is better.' Likewise it is permissible if one was to pray it after witr and

before fajr, but it will not be accepted to pray it before 'isha according to consensus.

„There is ittifaq amongst the scholars that with praying in Ramadan, Qiyaam in Ramadan, is meant the tarawih prayer.“ (Ayni, Umdat'al Qari 9/198; Sharbini, al Iqna 1/117)

Ibn Taymiyyah stated: 'Whoever prays it before 'isha has traversed the path of the innovators, and once fajr has entered, the time for the prayer would have elapsed.' The timing of it as stated by al 'iqnaa' and others is as follows: 'Its timing begins after 'isha and its sunnah, before witr up until the second fajr.' It is prescribed to offer the night prayers in Ramadaan in congregation or individually, but it is better to do it in congregation than to do it individually.

It was reported in al Bukhari that 'Umar gathered the people together and were led in the Taraweeh prayer by Ubayy bin Ka'b.

Offering Taraweeh prayer in congregation is something that is established by the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) stated the reason why he did not persist in offering this prayer in congregation, which is that he feared that it might be made obligatory.

Abu Hurairah (ra) said: RasulAllah (saw) saw a group of people in a corner of the masjid praying during Ramadan. He asked: 'What are they doing?' It was answered: 'They are people who haven't memorized much of the Qur'an. So Ubayy ibn Ka'b leads them in prayer.' RasulAllah (saw) said: 'Well done. How nice is this behavior.' (Abu Dawud, Salat 318/1377)

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) led his companions in offering these prayers in congregation on several nights. It is proven in al-Saheehayn that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) led his companions in prayer (Taraweeh) for several nights, then on the third or fourth night he did not come out to them. When morning came he said: "Nothing prevented me from coming out to you except the fact that I feared that it would be made obligatory for you." (Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 1129)

According to the version narrated by Muslim (761): "But I feared that night prayers would be made obligatory for you and you would not be able to do them."

Imam Ahmad (rh) stated that 'Ali (ra), Jaabir and 'Abdullah used to pray in congregation, and the companions continued to do this. It was also reported by al Bayhaqi and others that 'Ali used to appoint an Imam for the men and an Imam for the women.

Narrated 'Ursa: That he was informed by 'Aisha, "Allah's Apostle went out in the middle of the night and prayed in the mosque and some men prayed behind him. In the morning, the people spoke about it and then a large number of them gathered and prayed behind him (on the second night). In the next morning the people again talked about it and on the third night the mosque was full with a large number of people. Allah's Apostle came out and the people prayed behind him. On the fourth night the Mosque was overwhelmed with people and could not accommodate them, but the Prophet came out (only) for the morning prayer. When the morning prayer was finished he recited Tashahhud and (addressing the people) said, "Amma ba'du, your presence was not hidden from me but I was afraid lest the night prayer (Qiyam) should be enjoined on you and you might not be able to carry it on." So, Allah's Apostle died and the situation remained like that (i.e. people prayed individually)." (Bukhari, Volume 3, Book 32, Number 229)

This reason cased to be applicable after the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) died, because when he (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) died, the wahy (revelation) ceased and there was no longer any worry that it might be made obligatory. Once the reason, which was the fear of it being made obligatory, disappeared with the cessation of the wahy, then the fact that it is Sunnah to offer this prayer in congregation resumed.

Ibn 'Abd al-Barr said: This indicates that praying qiyaam in Ramadaan is one of the Sunnahs of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and is recommended and encouraged. It was not introduced by 'Umar ibn al-Khattaab, rather he revived something that the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) loved and approved of. Nothing stopped him from doing it regularly except the fear that it might be made obligatory upon his ummah. He (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) was kind and compassionate towards his ummah. 'Umar knew from the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) that the obligatory duties would not be increased or decreased after his death (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), so he revived this practice and enjoined it upon the people. That happened in 14 AH, and 'Umar has the honour of being the one who revived this Sunnah. (Al-Tamheed, 8/108, 109)

After the death of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), the Sahaabah (may Allaah be pleased with them) prayed Taraweeh in small groups and individually, until 'Umar (may Allaah be pleased with him) united them behind a single imam.

It was narrated that 'Abd al-Rahmaan ibn 'Abd al-Qaari' said: I went out with 'Umar ibn al-Khattaab (may Allaah be pleased with him) one night in Ramadaan to the mosque, and the people were scattered, with one man praying by himself and another with a group of men following his prayer. 'Umar said: "I think that if I gather them behind one reader, it will be better." Then he decided to unite them behind Ubayy ibn Ka'b. Then I went out with

him on another night, and the people were praying behind their reader. 'Umar said: "What a good innovation this is. But the prayer that they forget about and sleep is better than the one they are offering." (Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 1906)

It is disliked to pray supererogatory prayers between them; i.e. between the taraweeh prayers. Al Athram reported that Abu Dardaa' saw some people praying between taraweeh and said: 'What prayer is this? Are you praying whilst the Imam is in front of you? Indeed, the one who seeks other than our way is not from us.'

Similar has also been reported from 'Ubaadah and 'Uqbah bin 'Aamir. It was mentioned to Imam Ahmad (rh) that some companions permitted this and thus replied: 'That is falsehood (baatil)'. That is the case because it shows that the person is not content with the Imam. This all applies if there was no large gap between the prayers; for example if the Imam left the mosque or the Imam delayed part of the prayer towards the end of the night, which in that case; is permissible. This was stated by our Sheikh. As for the aforementioned al Athram, then his full name is Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Haani' at-Taa'ee, of the great scholars of Islam and the author of as-Sunan and other works. He narrated from Imam Ahmad, 'Affan and others. Imam an-Nasaa'ee narrated from him as well as others. He died in the year 260 AH.

But it is not disliked to do tawaaf between taraweeh. What is apparent is that the sunnah of tawaaf is also not disliked due to what has been mentioned. This is the case even if they returned to it before sleep or they did not delay it to midnight.

It is not recommended for the Imam to recite more than the whole Qur'an (throughout Ramadan) in taraweeh unless the people prefer to increase upon that.

This is in order not to make it difficult for the people. This was stated by al Qadhi and others. Imam Ahmad said: 'He should recite in the month of Ramadan that which is easy for the people and not make it difficult for them, especially in the shorter nights.'

It was stated in al Ghunyah: 'One should not recite more than the whole Qu'ran (throughout Ramadan) as it might be difficult for the people as well as result in them leaving the prayer, and thus his sin will become greater.'

It was also said that one should look into the state of the people. Ibn Taymiyyah also stated as previously mentioned that the best for the one who cannot manage a lot; is to lighten the prayer for him.

Likewise, it is not recommended for him to recite less than the entire Qur'an in order to attain the reward of it; i.e. the reward of the khatmah. Thus the

people should be able to listen to the entire Qur'an with him. Ibn Taymiyyah stated that [to recite the \(entire\) Qur'an in taraweeh is recommended according to the agreement of the scholars of the Muslims](#). In fact, one of the intended objectives of taraweeh is to recite the Qur'an so that people can listen to the speech of Allah (swt). This is the case since Ramadan was the month in which the Qur'an descended, and in this month Jibreel used to revise the entire Qur'an with the Prophet (saw).

Imam Ahmad (may Allaah have mercy on him) used to like to complete the Qur'aan with those whom he led in prayer, and this is akin to what the salaf did, namely liking to hear the entire Qur'aan. But this does not mean that one should rush and not be deliberate in ones recitation, and not seek to be focused and calm, rather seeking these things is better than seeking to complete it.

The Hanbalis and most of the Hanafi shaykhs – and it was also narrated by al-Hasan from Abu Haneefah – are of the view that the Sunnah is to complete the Qur'aan in Taraweeh prayer so that the people can hear the entire Qur'aan in that prayer.

The Hanafis said: The Sunnah is to complete it once. So the imam should not forsake completing it because of the people's laziness, rather he should recite ten verses or so in each rak'ah, and thus he will be able to complete it. (This is based on the assumption that he prays twenty rak'ahs each night.)

And it was said that in each rak'ah thirty verses should be recited, because 'Umar (may Allaah be pleased with him) enjoined that. In that case the Qur'aan can be completed three times in Ramadaan.

Al-Kaasaani said: [What 'Umar enjoined was by way of doing more of a good thing, which is to complete the Qur'aan more than once. This is what was suitable for their time. But in our time it is better for the imam to recite on the basis of the people's situation; he should recite whatever will not put them off from joining the congregation, because increasing the size of the congregation is better than lengthening the recitation.](#) End quote.

What al-Kaasaani said is good, and the imam should pay attention to the situation of the people behind him. It is not permissible for the imam to put people off by making the prayer so long that it becomes difficult for them and to think that if he does not do that he has done badly! What he should do is to encourage the people to pray even if that is by making it shorter, so long as the prayer is complete. It is better for the people to offer a short but complete prayer than not to pray at all.

Abu Dawood said: [Ahmad ibn Hanbal was asked about a man who recited the Qur'aan twice in Ramadaan, leading the people in prayer. He said: In my view this depends on the people's energy level, and whether there are](#)

workers among them.

Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali said: The words of Imam Ahmad indicate that attention should be paid to the state of the people with regard to recitation; he should not make it too hard for them. This view was also echoed by other fuqaha' among the companions of Abu Haneefah and others. (Lataa'if al-Ma'arif, p. 18)

Because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said:
"When any one of you leads the people in prayer, let him make it short, because among them are the weak, the young and those who have needs."

One should try and finish the Qur'an in the last taraweeh before the rukoo', and it is recommended for one to supplicate after that as was stated by Imam Ahmad. He also used in support of his view that he saw the people of Shaam as well as Sufyan bin 'Uyaynah doing that.

It was also transmitted from the people of Basrah that they used to do that in addition to 'Uthman and other companions. And there is no harm if a person was to raise his hands in doing so. Likewise many scholars recommended that.

Ibn Taymiyyah had a supplication for the khatm of the Qur'an which was very comprehensive. He said: 'It was reported that there is a supplication that is answered at the time of a khatmah. Thus if a person supplicated at the end of a khatmah for himself, his parents, his scholars, the believing men and women etc, then that is legislated.'

Ibn al Arabi said: "This is an evidence (referring to a hadith in Bukhari 1/268), that it is ja'eez to repeat a surah in every rakah. I saw an Imam near the door of al-Asbat among 28 Imams, and he was leading the turks in tarawih prayer and he was reciting 'al hamdu lillah' (al Fatiha) and 'Qul huwa Allahu Ahad' (al Ikhlas) in every rakah, until tarawih was over, to make the prayer easy and because of the benefits of this surah. Actually it is not sunnah to make hateem of the Qur'an during Ramadan.

I say: This is what Malik says. He said: It is not sunnah to make hateem of the Qur'an in the masjids. (al Qurtubi, al Jami lil Ahkam il Qur'an)

It is befitting that the one who delays part of the taraweeh in the last ten nights to do so to the last part of the night, so that those who didn't attend the first part could attend the second part. Likewise they can begin another khatmah so that those who attend the second part of the prayer can listen to the entire Qur'an.

Narrated Aisha:

With the start of the last ten days of Ramadan, the Prophet used to tighten his waist belt (i.e. work hard) and used to pray all the night, and used to keep his family awake for the prayers. **(Bukhari, Volume 3, Book 32, Number 241)**

It is better to delay the prayer during the last ten nights, and Ibn Taymiyyah preferred that one spend the night in prayer. He stated: 'To pray some of the nights in entirety has been reported in the sunnah. It was reported in the two Saheehs that: 'When the last ten nights entered he (saw) would spend the night in prayer and awoke his family and tightened his waist wrapper.'

It was also reported in at-Tirmidhi that: 'Towards the end of the month, he (saw) would call his family and prayed with them so that they would fear that the time of suhoor would pass by them' and the companions used to extend their prayers in the last ten nights close to the time of fajr as was reported in many narrations.

Abu Dawud reported that 'Umar (ra) said: 'To delay the prayer towards the end of the night is the sunnah of the Muslims.'

And Imam Malik reported that 'Umar commanded Ubayy and Tameem to lead the people in prayer with chapters that were longer than 100 verses (mi'een) such that people would lean on their sticks due to the length of the prayer, and we did not leave until fajr had almost entered.'

He also reported that Ubay said: 'When we used to finish from our night prayers in Ramadan we would hurry our servants in serving suhoor out of fear that fajr would enter.'

Likewise, the hadeeth: "Indeed, the prayer towards the end of the night is witnessed (mashoodah), and that is better."

There is no dispute over this, and likewise to depend on a stick for the night prayer is permissible according to the agreement of the scholars.

There are two opinions amongst the scholars in Islam regarding the rakahs to be prayed in the tarawih prayers in Ramadan. Some scholars are of the opinion that it is eight rakahs plus three 'witr' (thus 11 rakahs), while others are of the opinion that it is twenty rakahs plus three witr (or total 23 rakahs). According to the majority of scholars tarawih prayer is 20 raka'a.

Two groups have gone to extremes with regard to this matter. The first group denounced everyone who prays more than eleven rak'ahs and said that doing so was bid'ah. The second group denounced those who do only eleven rak'ahs and said that they are going against scholarly consensus (ijmaa'

What has authentically been reported from the Prophet sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam confirms the fact that there is much latitude with respect to the

number of raka'at to be performed in the tarawih prayer, and that there is no definite number.

Abu Hurairah reports that the Prophet (saws) would encourage people to perform the special night prayers during Ramadan (tarawih) without commanding them as obligatory and he (saws) said: "Whoever prays during the nights of Ramadan [tarawih] with a firm belief and hoping for reward, all of his previous sins would be forgiven."

Another evidence that there is no set number for prayers at night – which include Taraaweeth – is the hadeeth of Ibn 'Umar according to which a man asked the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) about prayer at night. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "Prayers at night are to be offered two by two (two rak'ahs at a time). If any of you fears that the time of dawn is approaching then let him pray one rak'ah as Witr." (Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 846; Muslim, 749)

RasulAllah (saw) didn't mention a number here.

Al-Suyooti said: What is narrated in the saheeh and hasan ahaadeeth is the command to observe night prayers during Ramadaan, which is encouraged without specifying a particular number. It is not proven that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) prayed twenty rak'ahs of Taraaweeth, rather that he prayed at night, with an unspecified number of rak'ahs. Then he delayed it on the fourth night lest it become obligatory for them and they might not be able to do it.

Ibn Hajar al-Haythami said: There is no saheeh report that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) prayed twenty rak'ahs of Taraaweeth. The narration which suggests that he "used to pray twenty rak'ahs" is extremely weak (da'eef). (Al-Mawsoo'ah al-Fiqhiyyah, 27/142-145)

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah said: If a person prays Taraweeth according to the madhhabs of Abu Haneefah, al-Shaafa'i and Ahmad, with twenty rak'ahs, or according to the madhhab of Maalik, with thirty-six rak'ahs, or with thirteen or eleven rak'ahs, he has done well, as Imam Ahmad said, because there is nothing to specify the number. So the greater or lesser number of rak'ahs depends on how long or short the qiyaam (standing in the prayer) is. (Al-Ikhtiyaaraat, p. 64)

The scholars who opine that the Tarawih salaah should be eight rakahs plus three witr, use these narrations as their evidence:

Narrated Abu Salama ibn Abdur Rahman that he asked Aisha (Allah be pleased with her), "How was the prayer of Allah's Apostle (Peace be upon him) in Ramadan?" She replied, "He did not pray more than eleven raka'at in Ramadan or in any other month. He used to pray four raka'at - let alone their

beauty and length - and then he would pray four - let alone their beauty and length - and then he would pray three rak'aat (witr)." She added, "I asked, 'O Allah's Apostle! Do you sleep before praying the witr?' He replied, 'O Aisha, My eyes sleep but my heart does not sleep.'" (Bukhari, 3/230, English edn)

First, it should be said that the hadith reported from Aisha (Allah be pleased with her) about 11 rak'ahs is not at all to do with tarawih, according to the majority of scholars, but in fact concerns the number of rak'ahs of tahajjud prayer!

The commentator of al-Sahih al-Bukhari and the erudite traditionist, Shamsud-Din al-Kermani (d. 786 AH) said: 'In the hadith (above), the tahajjud prayer is meant. Abu Salama's question and Aisha's answer concerned the tahajjud.'

He adds further: 'If the tahajjud prayer is not meant, then this tradition will be at variance with the tradition that states that the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) led twenty rak'ahs each for two nights, and in the case of such clash the tradition of twenty rak'ahs which is affirmative (muthbit) shall have precedence because according to the principles of hadith, the affirmative takes precedence over the negative (naaf)' (Al-Kawakib ud-Durari Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari, vol. 9, pg 155-156)

A great fact that should also be noted is that the Imams of hadith have placed the hadith from Aisha (Allah be pleased with her) under the section of tahajjud prayers, which indicates their belief that the hadith applies to tahajjud only. The Imam al-Muhaddithin al-Bukhari (Rahimahullah) has placed the hadith from Aisha under at least two sections of his Sahih, first under the section of '21: The tahajjud Prayer at Night' (see Sahih al-Bukhari, vol. 2, chapter 15, no. 248, English ed'n) and then under the section of '32: The Book of taraweeh Prayers' (see Sahih al-Bukhari, 3/230, pg. 128 English ed'n).

This means that Imam Bukhari believed that the prayer mentioned by Aisha was that of tahajjud only, and since the tahajjud prayer is performed also in Ramadan, then Imam Bukhari also quoted the same hadith under 'The book of taraweeh prayers', but Allah knows best.

Imam Muslim (Rahimahullah) has also placed the hadith from Aisha under the tahajjud prayer section (see Sahih Muslim 1/1607, pg. 356, English ed'n).

Also Imam Malik (Rahimahullah) has placed Aisha's hadith under the Book of tahajjud (see Al-Muwatta, Book 7, section 7.2, no. 9, pg. 5, English ed'n).

Abu Dawood has also placed the same hadith under the chapter 'On the number of rak'ahs of the prayer at night (tahajjud)' (see Abu Dawood 1/1336, pg. 351, English version).

Tirmidhi and Nisai also placed Aisha's hadith under the tahajjud section (see Tirmidhi, vol. 1, pg. 58 and Nisai, vol. 1, pg. 154).

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya placed the aforementioned hadith in the section of tahajjud prayers too, in his book Zaad al Ma'ad (vol. 1, pg. 86)!

Abu Bakr ibn Arabi writes: 'the 11 Rakats (8 Rakats Nafl, 3 Witr) narration related by Aisha (ra) refers to the Qiyam ul Layl (Tahajud) of the Prophet (saw).' (Aridatul Ah'wadhi Shara Tirmidhi vol 4, p19)

Ibn Hajar Al Asqalani also refers to this narration as referring to the Tahajud (8 Rakats) with Witr (3 Rakats). (Fathul Bari Sharah Bukhari vol 3, p328)

Qadhi Iyadh Maliki has taken all of Aisha (ra) narrations as referring to the Tahajud prayer of the Prophet (saw), which He would perform in Her house. (Sharah Muslim Nawawi vol 1, p253)

Mohammad Shawqani writes: 'The narration of Aisha (ra) in Sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim referring to the 11 Rakats in and outside of Ramadhan is in respect of Tahajud Qiyam ul Layl. (Naylul Awtar vol 3, p39)

Abdul Aziz Muhaddith Dehlawi states: 'the narration of Aisha (ra) is in regards to Tahajud which whether it was Ramadhan or not the Prophet would always perform. (Fatawa Azizia p125)

Moreover, Qurtubi's (d. 671/1273) statement regarding this hadith (of Aisha) should not be overlooked that, 'many a man of knowledge considers the aforesaid hadith mudtarib (i.e. confounded).'" (Ayni in his Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari, vol. 2, pg. 187)

In short, the aforesaid report is in no way a proof for eight rak'ahs of taraweeh.

Yahya ibn Yahya al-Laythi, related from his teacher Imam Malik, who related from Muhammad ibn Yusuf, who said that as-Saaib ibn Yazid said, "Umar ibn al-Khattab (Allah be pleased with him) ordered Ubayy ibn Ka'b and Tamim ad-Dari (Allah be pleased with them) to watch the night in prayer with the people for eleven rak'ahs. The reciter of the Qur'an would recite the Mi'in (a group of medium sized surah's) until we would be leaning on our staffs from having stood so long in prayer. And we would not leave until the approach of dawn." (al-Muwatta)

If we analyse the chain (Isnad) of this hadith, we notice that Muhammad ibn Yusuf narrates from Saaib ibn Yazid. Muhammad (ibn Yusuf) has 5 students and the narration of each student differs from the next (i.e. the text of the hadith is different from each student).

The five students are:

- (1) Imam Malik
- (2) Yahya ibn Qattan
- (3) Abdul Aziz ibn Muhammad
- (4) Ibn Ishaq and
- (5) Abdur Razzaq

Their narrations are as follows:

- (1) Imam Malik says that Umar ordered Ubayy ibn Ka'b and Tamim Dari to perform 11 rakaats. (What practise occurred thereafter is not mentioned, nor is Ramadaan mentioned).
- (2) Yahya ibn Qattan says that Umar made the people gather with Ubayy ibn Ka'b and Tamim Dari and both of them began performing 11 rakaats. (Umar's command is not mentioned, nor is any mention of Ramadaan made).
- (3) Abdul Aziz (ibn Muhammad) says that we used to perform 11 rakaats in the era of Umar. (Neither is the command mentioned, nor is Ubayy ibn Ka'b or Ramadaan mentioned).
- (4) Ibn Ishaq says that we used to perform 13 rakaats in Ramadaan during the era of Umar. (Neither is the command of Umar mentioned. Instead of 11 rakaats, 13 are mentioned).
- (5) Abdur Razzaq says that Umar gave the command of 21 rakaats. (In this narration 21 rakaats are mentioned instead of 11).

Besides the narration of Imam Malik (Rahimahullah), 11 rakaats can not be established from the other narrations. Due to this difference, the narrator Ibn Ishaq gave preference to 13 while Ibn Abdal Barr al-Maliki preferred 21 (from the narration of Abdur Razzaq). Therefore this narration is Mudtarib (a hadith that is transmitted in different manners, so that the contents of each transmission differ, and it is not possible to give preference to any particular transmission) with regards to the number (of rak'ahs) and hence unacceptable.

The above was an analysis of Muhammad ibn Yusuf's narration via Saaib ibn Yazid. Now let us examine the narration of Yazid ibn Khaseefah via Saaib (ibn Yazid), which is mentioned in the Sunan al- Kubra of al-Bayhaqi (vol. 2, pg. 496): **Abu Zi'b narrates from Yazid ibn Khaseefah, who reports from Saaib ibn Yazid that the people used to perform 20 rakaats in the month of Ramadaan during the era of Umar.** Imam Nawawi, Iraqi and Suyuti (all three were great scholars of hadith) amongst others have accepted the authenticity of this hadith (see **Tuhfatul Akhyaar, pg. 192 and Irshaadus Saari, pg. 74, by Imam al-Qastallani**)

Muhammad ibn Jafar (another narrator in the chain) has quoted the statement from Yazid (ibn Khaseefah) as Abu Zi'b (had). This narration is mentioned in Marifatul Sunan of al-Bayhaqi. Allamah Subki and Mullah Ali al-Qari have stated in Sharh Minhaaj and Sharh Muwatta respectively that

the chain of narrators of this hadith are correct. (Tuhfatul Ahwazee, vol.2, pg 75)

From the above narration we can clearly see that both the students of Yazid (ibn Khaseefah), unanimously narrate the fact that during Umar's (Allah be pleased with him) era 20 rakaats was the standard practise. On the contrary, the 5 students of Muhammad ibn Yusuf quote Saaib (ibn Yazid) differently.

In such a situation the correct approach would be to rely on the narration of Yazid ibn Khaseefah.

Another hadith that is used by the protagonists of eight rak'ahs of taraweeh has been related by Jabir ibn Abdullah (Allah be pleased with him): "The Prophet (Peace be upon him) led the people in prayer during Ramadan with 8 rak'ahs and the witr. We gathered in the Mosque the following night hoping that he would come again. We remained waiting till the next morning (until he came out). The Prophet (Peace be upon him) said, 'I feared that the witr may become incumbent on you.'" (related by Ibn Nasr al-Marwazi in Qiyamul-Layl, pg. 90, al-Tabarani and Ibn Hibban)

Another variation from this hadith of Jabir (r.a.) is that the Prophet (saws) prayed eight rak'at and the witr prayer with the companions (and this was during Ramadan).

The above hadith has been analysed by Abdur Rahim in his "Fatawa" (vol. 1, pg. 278-9) with the conclusion that the hadith is Daeef. He said: "The strange thing about this hadith is that its chain of authorities (Isnad) is not trustworthy. Please examine the statements of the Imams of this science concerning the narrators of this chain. In this chain one narrator is Ibn Hameed Razi, about whom the opinions of the great and august critics of hadith are as under:

- (1) 'He is weak.' - Hafiz al-Dhahabi (see his Mizanul I'tidal, vol.3, pp. 49-50)
- (2) 'He narrates many disowned (munkar) hadiths.' - Ya'qub ibn Shaybah
- (3) 'He is objectionable.' - Imam Bukhari
- (4) 'He is a liar.' - Abu Zur'ah
- (5) 'I testify that he is a liar.' - Ishaq Kausaj
- (6) 'He narrates hadiths about everything; I have not seen a man bolder than him vis-a-vis God.' - Sauleh Jazrah
- (7) 'By God! He is a liar.' - Ibn Kharash
- (8) 'He is not reliable.' - Imam Nisai

Now, about the second narrator, Ya'qub ibn Abdullah Ash'ari al-Qummi:

- (1) 'He is not strong.' - Daraqutni (see Mizanul I'tidal, vol. 3, pg. 324).

About the third narrator, Isa ibn Jariyah:

- (1) 'He has had disowned (munkar) hadiths.' - Ibn Ma'een

- (2) 'His hadiths are disavowed.' - Nisai
- (3) 'His hadiths are rejected (matruk).' - Nisai
- (4) 'His hadiths are disavowed.' - Abu Dawood – synopsis
- (5) 'He is counted among the weak.' - (see **Mizanul-I'tidal, vol. 2, pg. 311, by Hafiz al-Dhahabi**). Here ends the quote.

Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani has reported a similar narration to the above hadith in his *Bulugh al-Maram min Adillat al-Ahkam* (no. 396, pg. 159), on the authority of Hafiz Ibn Hibban "Narrated Jabir ibn Abdullah (Allah be pleased with him): Allah's Apostle (Peace be upon him) prayed during the night in Ramadan; the people waited for him on the next day, but he did not come out; and he said, 'I feared that the witr might be enjoined on you.'" Note the above narration does not even state how many rak'ahs were performed by the Prophet (Peace be upon him)!!

The above two hadiths can not be used as justifiable proof in favour of 8 rak'ahs of taraweeh on their own.

Abu Ya'la and at-Tabarani record, from Jabir that Ubayy ibn Ka'b (r.a.) came to the Prophet (saws) and said: "O Messenger of Allah (saws), I have done something last night," (i.e., during Ramadan). The Prophet said: 'And what was that, O Ubayy?' He said: The women in my house said, 'We don't recite Qur'an [well or much] so can we pray behind you?' I prayed eight rak'at and the witr prayer with them.

The Messenger of Allah (saws) was pleased with that and did not say anything."

Abu Bakr 'Abdul 'Azeez narrated in 'ash-Shaafi' on the authority of 'Ibn 'Abbas that the Prophet (saw) used to pray 20 rak'ah in the month of Ramadan. (This was reported by Ibn Abi Shaybah. However, the chain of narration contains Ibrahim bin 'Uthman who is considered to be weak according to the agreement of the scholars.)

Al Bayhaqi narrated in 'al Ma'rifah' on the authority of Saa'ib bin Yazeed who said: 'We used to pray at the time of 'Umar (ra) 20 rak'ah as well as witr.' (an-Nawawi said: 'its chain of narration is saheeh.')

The twenty rak'ah the Companions Consensus (Ijma-as-Sahaba) has taken place over the approval of Ibn Abbas' hadith and practically the majority of Ulama have accepted it." (**Fatawa Rahimmiyah, vol. 1, pg 276-277**)

Malik also reported as well as others that: the people used to offer 23 rak'ah in the time of 'Umar (ra) during the month of Ramadan.

Thus 20 was the established practice of the rightly guided caliphs.

Al Qaadhi said: 'There is no difference of opinion that there is no specific limit that one cannot go beyond or decrease from. Rather the difference of opinion lies in how much the Prophet (saw) exactly prayed and what he chose for himself to pray.'

It was the case that Imam Ahmad as well as the majority of scholars chose 20 rak'ah since the night prayer is an act of worship which its reward for it is increased the more it is performed. This is something the scholars do not dispute over.

Ahmad ibn Hajar al-Asqalani (d. 852/1449) has reproduced from Imam Rafi'i (Allah's mercy be on him): "For two nights the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) led twenty rak'ahs of prayer each night; on the third night the people gathered but the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) did not come out. Then the next morning, he told the people, 'It so occurred to me that it would be made obligatory for you, and you would not be able to discharge this obligation.'"

After reproducing this tradition, Ibn Hajar said: "All the traditionalists (Muhaddithin) are unanimous about the soundness of this report." (see *Talkhis al-habir fi takhrij ahadith al-Rafi'i al-Kabir*, vol. 1, pg. 119, by Hafiz ibn Hajar)

It was stated in *Fayd ul-Bari Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari* (by Anwar Shah Kashmiri): "Imam Abu Yusuf (Rahimahullah) asked Imam Abu Hanifah (Rahimahullah), 'Did Umar (Allah be pleased with him) have any compact from the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) for 20 rak'ahs of taraweeh?' The Imam replied, 'Umar was not one to invent on his own; certainly he had some proof with him for this!'" (also found in *Maraq' ul-Falah*, pg. 81, by Imam al-Shurunbulali and *Bahr ur Ra'iq*, vol.2, pg. 66, by Imam ibn Nujaim al-Misri)

Tirmidhi said: "Umar, Ali as well as other Companions (Allah be pleased with them all) and Sufyan al-Thauri, Ibn al-Mubarak and Imam al-Shafi'i (Allah's mercy be upon them), all believed in 20 rak'ahs of taraweeh, and Imam Shafi'i has stated that he had seen the people of Makkah saying 20 rak'ahs. (see *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, vol.1, pg. 99)

It was written in the most authentic book on Maliki Fiqh, *al-Mudawwanah* (vol.1, pg. 193-94), by Qadi Sahnoun: "Ibn al-Qasim said, 'The rak'ahs (of taraweeh) with witr are 39.' Imam Malik said, 'This is what the people have agreed upon from amongst the predecessors, and the people have not stopped doing it.'"

Ibn Humam asserts that it has been established from genuine authority that the Companions and their Successors (tabi'in) used to say twenty rak'ahs of

taraweeh during the auspicious time of Umar (Allah be pleased with him); this authority of Yazid ibn Ruman has been reported from Sa'ib ibn Yazid that, 'during Umar's auspicious time we used to say twenty rak'ahs.' The genuineness of this authority has been verified by Imam Nawawi in the synopsis. (see **Fath al-Qadir**, vol.1, pg. 407 and **Nasb-ur-Rayah**, vol.1, pg. 294, by Hafiz al-Zaylai)

Ibn Humam also said in **Fath al-Qadir** (vol.1, pg. 470): "At last unanimity was formed on 20 rak'ahs of prayer and this alone is in succession." This last statement has also been said in similar words by Ibn Taymiyya in his **Minhaj us-Sunnah** (vol.2, pg. 224).

The august successor (Tabi'in) and Mufti of Makkah in his time Imam Ata ibn Abi Rabah (Rahimahullah) said: "I have seen the Companions, and other people in Makkah saying 23 rak'ahs, including the witr." This report is Hasan (good). (see **Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaybah**, pg. 406, **Fath al-Bari**, vol.4, pg. 219, of Hafiz Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, **Qiyam ul-Layl**, pg. 91, by Imam Ibn Nasr al-Marwazi)

Muwaffaq al-Din Ibn Qudama al-Maqdisi (d. 620/1223; R.A), said in his book **al-Mughni** (vol.1, pg 803): "There has been the Companion's consensus (Ijma-as-Sahaba) on 20 rak'ahs of taraweeh."

Anwar Shah Kashmiri stated in his published lecture, **Tirmidhi al-ma'ruf ba-Arfa'sh-Shazzi** (vol.1 pg. 329): "Not even one of the the four Imams believes in less than 20 rak'ahs of taraweeh; the practise and belief of the majority of the Companions was also this. Imam Malik (Allah's mercy be upon him) believes in more than 20 rak'ahs; he is positive that they are 36. According to Imam Malik's practise only 20 rak'ahs of taraweeh will be said in congregation, but the general practise and method of the citizens of Madinah was that during the brief rest interval (after every 4 rak'ahs), when the Imam sat down after 4 rak'ahs, they used to perform 4 more rak'ahs. The men who said the taraweeh in the sacred mosque at Makkah, used to circumambulate (Tawaf) the Ka'ba during this brief recess. The people of Madinah, naturally, could not circumambulate the Ka'ba and hence, instead, they used to perform 16 rak'ahs more (in total) during these brief recesses."

Ayni (d. 855/1451) wrote in his **Sharh al-Bukhari**: "The number of rak'ahs in the taraweeh is twenty. Imam Shafi'i and Imam Ahmed (Allah's mercy be upon them) assert the same thing. Their proof is the report which Bayhaqi has, with genuine authority, narrated from Sa'ib ibn Yazid. The great Companions, including Umar, Uthman and Ali (may Allah be pleased with them), as also the revered Successors (Tabi'in), used to perform twenty rak'ahs."

Then he said: "The most excellent and the most advisable course to conform to is that of the Holy Prophet's and his (Peace and blessings be upon him)

Companions (practise)." (Umdat ul-Qari Sharh-al-Bukhari, vol. 7, pg. 178)

Taqi-ad-Din Ahmad Ibn Taymiyya al-Hanbali (d. 728/1328) has said: "It has been proven without doubt that Ubayy ibn Ka'b (Allah be pleased with him) used to lead the Companions, during Ramadan, for 20 rak'ahs and 3 rak'ahs of witr. Hence it is the principle (maslak) of most of the Ulama that this is the Sunnah, because Ubayy ibn Ka'b led 20 rak'ahs of prayer in the presence of the Muhajirin (the emigrants) and the Ansars (the helpers) and not a single Companion repudiated it!" (Majmu al Fatawa vol.1, pg. 191)

Sa'eeb ibn Yazid said: 'In the time of Umar ibn al-Khattab (Allah be pleased with him) the people used to observe 20 rak'ahs Tarawih and the witr.' (Marifat-us-Sunan wa'l athar - Imam Bayhaqi, Volume 004, Page No. 42, Hadith Number 5409)

al-Bayhaqi has also reported another version of the above narration through a different channel of transmission.

Sa'eeb bin Yazeed (ra) said: "In the time of Umar ibn al-Khattab (Allah be pleased with him), they would perform 20 rak'ahs Tarawih in the month of Ramadan. He said (also): And they would recite the Mi'in, and they would lean on their sticks in the time of Uthman ibn Affan (Allah be pleased with him), from the discomfort of standing." (Bayhaqi Sunan al-Kubra Volume 002, Page No. 698-9, Hadith Number 4617)

Imam al-Nawawi said: 'Its Isnad is Sahih.' (Al-Khulasa al-Ahkam, Hadith Number 1961)

Badr ud Din Ayni states: Imam al-Bayhaqi has narrated with "sahih chain" from the companion Sai'b bin Yazid (ra) who said: During the tenure of Umar (RA) people used to stand for 20 Rakahs (of Tarawih), same was done in the time Uthman (ra) and Ali (ra). (Umdat ul Qari, Sharh Sahih ul Bukhari, Volume No. 5, Page No. 264, Published by Dar ul Fikr, Beirut, Lebanon)

Al-Mubarakfuri also declared the Sanad of this hadith as "Sahih" and he cited Imam al-Nawawi (rah)'s authentication. (Tuhfa Tul Ahwadhi, Volume No. 3, Page No. 453, Published by Dar ul Fikr, Beirut, Lebanon)

Imam Nimawi al Hanafi (rah) said: All the men in this Isnaad are "thiqa". (Athaar al-Sunnan 2/54)

Yahya related to me from Malik that Yazid ibn Ruman said, "The people used to watch the night in prayer during Ramadan for twenty-three rakahs in the time of Umar ibn al-Khattab." (Muwatta Imam Malik, Book: As Salah Chapter: Ma Ja'a fi Qiyamu Ramadan Volume: 1; Hadith number: 380)

The Majority amongst People of Knowledge, (agree) upon praying 20 Rakahs (of Tarawih) as is narrated from Umar (ra), Ali (ra) and other Sahaba of Prophet (saw). Sufyan Thawri (rah), Abdullah Ibn Mubarak (rah) and Imam Shafi'i (rah) said the same.

Imam Shafi'i (rah) said that he saw people of Makkah praying 20 Rakahs (Tarawih). (Sunnan Jami'i al Tirimdhi, Book of Fasting, Chapter on Qiyaam in Ramadan Volume 3, Hadith No. 806)

From Abdul Aziz bin Rafi who said: Ubay Ibn Ka'b (Allah be pleased with him) used to lead people during Ramadan in Madina Munawara for "20 Rakah" (Tarawih) and 3 Rakah Witr. (Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaybah Volume 5, Hadith Number 7766)

Abdur Rahman Sulami narrates that Ali (Allah be pleased with him) called the reciters of the Quran in Ramadan and commanded one of them to perform "twenty rakat" (Tarawih) while Ali (Allah be pleased with him) himself used to lead the witr prayer. (Bayhaqi Sunan al-Kubra Volume 2, Hadith Number 4620)

Imam Hassan al-Basri (May Allah have mercy upon him) said: Umar Ibnul Khattab (Allah be pleased with him) gathered people behind Ubayy Ibn Kab (Allah be pleased with him) in the Qiyaam of Ramadan and he led them for "20 Rakat". (Siyar al A'lam wa al Nubalah Volume 1, Biography of 'Ubayy Ibn Kab')

an-Nawawi said: 'Its Isnad is Sahih'. (Al-Khulasa al-Ahkam, Hadith Number 1961)

Abu al Hasna says that Ali (Allah be pleased with him) order a person to lead "20 rakat (Tarawih)" during Ramadan. (Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaybah, Volume 5, Hadith Number 7763)

Narrated by Waqi'i from Nafee bin Umar (Allah be pleased with him) who said: Ibn Abi Mulaika (ra) used to lead us in Ramadan for "20 Rakahs". (Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaybah, Volume 5, Hadith Number 7765)

Ibn Abbas (ra) narrated that the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) used to pray twenty raka'at by himself followed by Witr (every night) in the month of Ramadan. (Sunan Al-Baihaqi, Hadith Number 12102)

Ibn Abbas (ra) narrated that the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) used to pray twenty raka'at followed by Witr in the month of Ramadan. (Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaibah, Volume 2, Hadith Number 7692)

The hadith from Ibn Abbas (ra) establishing 20 Rakahs directly from the Prophet (Peace be upon him), however both the ahadith have a narrator called Abu Shaybah (i.e. grandfather of mighty Muhadith Ibn Abi Shaybah) who has difference of opinion over his reliability, most of the muhaditheen have considered him "weak".

Hence the hadith of Ibn Abbas (ra) is weak, so according to Usool of hadith which Imam Abu Dawud clarified the hadith of Ibn Abbas (ra) becomes Muqbool (accepted).

Abu Dawud said after narrating a hadith: **If there seems to be "contradiction" between 2 reports of Prophet (saw), then we take the practise which is confirmed by sahaba.** (Sunnan Abu Dawud under Hadith No. 1577)

Hence the hadith of Ibn Abbas (ra) is confirmed as it corresponds to the ahadith from Umar (ra), Ali (ra), Ubay Ibn Ka'b (ra) and many others.

From Ibn Abbas (ra): **Verily in the month of Ramadhan, the Prophet used to pray 20 Rakats and Witr independent from any congregation.** (Baihaqi As-Sunanul Kubra vol 2, p496)

Subqi Shafi' stated: **'Our belief is that the 20 Rakats Taraweeh is a Sunnah, which is proven from a sound chain.'** (Sharahul Minhaaj)

Al-Harith narrates that **he used to offer 20 rakats (tarawih) in Ramadan and also used to lead 3 witr and used to offer Qunut before Ruku.** (Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaybah Volume 5, Hadith Number 7767)

It is narrated from **Abi al-Bakhtari (ra) that he used to lead people in 5 Tarwihaat in Ramadan and with 3 (rakah) witr.** (Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaybah Volume 5, Hadith Number 7768)

Sa'eed bin Ubaid narrates that **Ali bin Rabiya (ra) used to lead them in 5 Tarwihat and 3 witr.** (Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaybah Volume 5, Hadith Number 7772)

The Prayer of Tarawih consists of 4 Tarwihs (resting period after every 4 rakahs) and 5 Tarwihaat which makes it $5 \times 4 = 20$

Ata Ibn Abi Rubah (ra) said: **I have always seen people performing twenty three Rakats including witr.** (Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaybah Volume 5, Hadith Number 7770)

It is proved from **Shaytar Ibn Shaki that he used to lead 20 rakaat Tarawih in Ramadan and also in witr.** (Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaybah Volume 5, Hadith Number 7762)

Ibn Quduma while proving Ijma on 20 Rakah Tarawih, writes:

The established proof in sight of Abi Abdullah (i.e. Imam Ahmad) is 20 rakahs and same is the saying of Thawri, Abu Hanifa and Shafi'i. In sight of Imam Malik it consists of 36 rakahs and Malik has followed the people of Madinah because Salah said that he saw people doing Qiyaam of 41 Rakahs out of which 5 were witr.

Our proof is that Umar (ra) gathered people behind ibn Ka'b and made him lead 20 rakahs of tarawih.

It is also narrated via route of Hassan that Umar (ra) gathered people behind Ubayy ibn Ka'b for 20 nights. And he used to offer Qunoot in the nisf of Ramadan and used to offer tarawih in his home in the last 10 days, this has been narrated by Abu Dawud and Saib bin Yazid.

Imam Malik has also narrated from Yazid bin Rumaan that during the tenure of Umar (ra) people used to offer 23 rakahs including witr.

It is also narrated from Ali (ra) that he ordered one person to lead others in 20 rakahs.

Therefore there is ijma in 20 rakahs tarawih.

That which Saleh has said that (i.e. 41 rakahs) then the answer to this is that Saleh is weak and we do not know who is given the report of 41 rakah.

It might be possible that Saleh saw some people praying 41 rakahs, but this is not hujjah. Even if we assume that people of Madinah prayed 41 rakahs still the order of Umar (ra) which was followed by all Sahaba during his time is more worthy of following.

Some scholars have said that people of Madina prayed 36 rakahs so that they can correspond to the people of Makkah because people of Makkah used to do 7 tawaaf after every 4 rakahs therefore the people of Madina in that time prayed 4 rakaat (i.e. nawafil). Now when we know that Sahaba of Prophet prayed 20 rakahs then we should follow it. **(Ibn Qudamah, al-Mughni Volume 2, Page No. 604)**

During the time of Umar b. Abdulaziz, the people of Medina observed the Taraweeh Prayer for thirty-six rakats. **(Fathu'l Bari, v.4, p.220)**

Waliullah Dehlawi writes: 'The 20 Rakats of Taraweeh is an 'established continuous Sunnah' (Sunnat Qai'mah Mutawatira) which has been practiced in its current form since the time of the 1st generation of Muslims (Salaf-us-Saliheen) in a united manner. Specifically, for the view of the 4 Imams to agree upon a matter is one of the greatest proofs of it being an established Sunnah.' **(Hujatulahil Baligha vol 1, p412-3)**

Verily 20 Rakats Taraweeh is Sunnah Muakkadah (an emphasized Sunnah) on both men and women. **(Ad-Durrul Mukhtar. vol 1 p.520)**

Al-Sarkhasi, who is one of the imams of the Hanafi school, said: It is twenty rak'ahs, apart from Witr, in our view. **(Al-Mabsoot, 2/145)**

Ibn Qudaamah said: The favoured view according to Abu 'Abd-Allaah (i.e.,

Imam Ahmad, may Allaah have mercy on him), is that it is twenty rak'ahs. This was the view of al-Thawri, Abu Hanfeefah and al-Shaafa'i. Maalik said it is thirty-six. (Al-Mughni, 1/457)

Al-Nawawi said: Taraaweeh prayer is Sunnah according to scholarly consensus. Our view is that it is twenty rak'ahs with ten tasleems, and it is permissible to pray it individually or in congregation. (Al-Majmoo', 4/31)

Al-Ghuniyatut Talibeen states: (Tarawih consists) of 20 Rakahs, in every second Rakah one should sit and say the Salaam, thus they become 5 Tarwihaat out of which every 4 are called Tarwih (i.e. 5 times 4 = 20) (Al Ghuniya'Tut Talibeen Volume 2, Page No. 25)

Imam Bukhari reported in his book al-Kuna:

Abu al-Khusaib (ra) narrated that Suwaid bin Ghafalah (ra) always led us in offering twenty raka'at Salat (al-Taraweeh) in the month of Ramadan. (al-Kuna Volume 2, Hadith Number 234)

On the authority of Aisha (ra): the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) performed twenty raka'at on 2 nights with people but he did not come out on the third night and said that I am afraid that it might become obligatory upon you (Sahaba). (Ibn Hajr, al-Talkhees al-Habeer, Volume 2, Hadith Number 540)

After this hadith Ibn Hajr al Asqalani said:

"All the traditionalists (Muhaddithin) are unanimous about the soundness of this report from Ayesha (ra), **but without the number of Rakahs.**"

It is true that during the time of Umar (r.a.), Uthman (r.a.), and Ali (r.a.) the believers prayed twenty rak'at in their tarawih prayers in Ramadan, and this is the opinion of the majority of the jurists of the Hanafi and Hanbali schools as well as that of Abu Dawud.

At-Tirmidhi says: "Most of the people of knowledge follow what has been related from Umar (r.a.) and Ali (r.a.) and other companions of the Prophet (saws), [i.e., that they prayed] twenty rak'at. And this is the opinion of eminent scholars of the stature of Imam al-Thauri, Ibn al-Mubarak, and ash-Shafi'i. And so I found the people of Makkah praying twenty rak'at."

From the above narrations, most of the scholars have opined that the Taraweeh prayers are of twenty rakahs; because it would be inconceivable for the Rightly Guided Khalifas to do something against the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah (saws).

And the Holy Prophet (May Allah's Peace and Blessings be upon him) said: "Hold firmly onto my sunnah and the Sunnah of Khulafa ar-Rashideen (the

four rightly-guided caliphs)." (Narrated in Sunnan Abu Dawood, Volume No. 2, Page No. 635; Sunan Tirmidhi Volume No.2, Page No.108; Sunan Darimi vol.1 pg.43; Ibn Majah and others)

One day the Apostle of Allah (saws) led us in prayer, then faced us and gave us a lengthy exhortation at which the eyes shed tears and the hearts were afraid. A man said: 'O Messenger of Allah (saws)! It seems as if it were a farewell exhortation, so what injunction do you give us?' He (saws) then said: 'I enjoin you to fear Allah, and to hear and obey, even if it be an Abyssinian slave (is appointed as your leader) , for those of you who live after me will see great disagreement. You must then follow my Sunnah and that of the Rightly-Guided Khalifas. Hold to it and stick fast to it. Avoid novelties, for every novelty is an innovation, and every innovation is an error.' (Sunan of Abu-Dawood Hadith 4590; Narrated by Irbad ibn Sariyah)

Among the sahaba, the Rightly-Guided Khalifas, had a very special place, and among them Abu Bakr (ra) and Umar (ra) had an even more special place. RasulAllah (saw) said: "Follow Abu Bakr and Umar after me." (Tirmidhi, Manaqib 16; Ibn Majah, Muqaddima 11; Musnad 5/382)

In the time of Ibn Taymiyyah when the Rawafid (Shia) put the blame upon Umar for creating the innovated practice of 20 Rakats Taraweeh. Ibn Taymiyyah responded to this allegation by writing in defence of Umar to the Rawafid: 'If Umar Farooq by establishing 20 Rakats of Taraweeh had been deemed to adopt a bad practise, then Ali would have put an end to this in his Khilafat. However, in the Khilafat of Ali, he too would read 20 Rakats Taraweeh prayer in Kufah. In the month of Ramadhan, Ali would state: 'May Allah enlighten the grave of Umar, just as He (Umar) has enlightened our Masajids for us.' (Minhaaj ul Sunnah vol 2, p224)

Abdullah Ibn Masood (ra), who is one of the most senior Sahabah in terms of knowledge and Taqwa, gave this advice to the Ummah in respect of the status of the Sahabah (ra) upon which we should reflect wholeheartedly: 'Ibn Masood stated: if you wish to follow the way of anyone, then follow the path of the Sahabah (ra). These Sahabah (ra) had pure hearts, depth of knowledge, were devoid of show and pomp, had simplicity and were the best people of this Ummah.

Allah (azze wa jalla) preferred this great group of the Sahabah (ra) for the company of his most beloved Prophet and used them to establish his Deen. For this reason, their greatness should be recognised and their path followed, as truly they were those who were upon the rightly guided straight path.' (Mishkaat Masabih, p32)

Asad bin Amr related from Imam Abu Yusuf: 'I asked Abu Hanifa about the matter of Taraweeh and what Umar had done in this respect. Abu Hanifa replied: '20 Rakats of Taraweeh is Sunnah Muakkadah. Umar did not establish this from his own accord, nor was he one to create innovations in

the Deen. Rather, he was the greatest in his hatred of innovation. The order that he gave for the 20 Rakats of Taraweeh, verily; there would have been an order of the Prophet in this respect.' (Marakeeyul Farah Ma'a Hashiya p334)

When Abu Hanifa was asked about Umar's application as regards to this issue, he answered: Taraweeh Prayer is a sunnah al-muakkada with no doubt. Umar's observing this prayer in community and for twenty rakats is not a personal preference and not an innovation, either. He did so depending on a juridical principle that he knew and on a will of Muhammad (pbuh). (at-Tahtawi, Hashiya, 334)

Imam Ahmed bin Hanbal stated: 'It has reached me that Umar bin Khattab would read 20 Rakats of Taraweeh.' (Al Mughni vol 2, p168/ Baihaqi vol 1, p296/ Muwatta Imam Malik p40)

Conclusion

We see that there is a much controversy among the ulama, about the number of rakah, so statements like "any addition to 8 raka'a is bidah" or "not praying 20 raka'a is rejecting the Sunnah and the consensus of the Sahabah" is only an evidence of how ignorant people can be, even in fields where they are well-known as authorities.

Thus, in light of the above narrations, there is no harm if one prays either eight rakahs or twenty rakahs in their Taraweeh prayers, because both ways, one would be in obedience and in accordance of the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah (saws).

There is also no harm in varying in the number of raka'at. If one prays eleven rak'ah in some nights and twenty three in others, then there is nothing wrong in this. Even if one is to pray more than twenty-three, there is no harm, for there is much leeway in the matter regarding the number of raka'at to be performed in tarawih.

Concerning completing the entire Qur'an in tarawih there is much latitude. I do not know of any evidence that proves that it is better, except for the fact that some scholars have mentioned that it is praiseworthy (mustahab) for the Imam to recite the entire Qur'an for the congregation, in order that they receive the opportunity to listen to its entirety. However, this is not a clear evidence.